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**Declaration by the Presidency of the European Union
on the application of the death penalty in Burundi**

The European Union strongly condemns the execution on 31 July of six prisoners in Burundi accused of crimes of genocide. It notes that these are the first executions of civilians in Burundi since 1982. The executions, coming as they do on the eve of multipartite negotiations, to which the Burundi Government is committed and which are due to begin at the end of August, send out negative signals both to the partners in the negotiations, and to the international community. They cast doubt on the genuine desire of the Government to reach a peaceful negotiated settlement of the crisis in Burundi.

In view of the above, the EU notes with concern that the execution of the six prisoners bears all the hallmarks of a deliberate political act. Furthermore, the EU considers that the prisoners who were condemned to death did not receive a fair trial, conducted in accordance with the rules of a truly impartial and independent judicial system.

While recognizing that the cycle of impunity in Burundi must be broken, the EU considers that legal certainty in Burundi can only be re-established by means of trials which offer all the judicial safeguards of the rule of law.

Bearing in mind the situation in Burundi and the state of the judicial system, the EU urgently appeals to the Government of Burundi to refrain from applying the death penalty delivered by a judicial system which is neither impartial nor independent.